

DRAFT MINUTES  
GROTON HEIGHTS SCHOOL REUSE TASK FORCE  
REGULAR MEETING  
CITY MUNICIPAL BUILDING, CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

November 7, 2011

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The meeting was called to order at 5:38 p.m. by Chair Catherine Kolnaski.

I. ROLL CALL

Members present were Janet Downs, Marian Galbraith, Bill Hart, Mary Kelly, Catherine Kolnaski and Ralph Whitney. A quorum of members was present.

Absent were Peter Ganacoplos, Dana Parfitt, Bob Peruzzotti and Archie Swindell.

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Project Management Specialist Holly Bridgham and City Planner Barbara Goodrich.

II. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS: None.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF OCTOBER 3, 2011

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Ms. Galbraith, seconded by Ms. Kelly.

Vote on approval of the minutes carried 5 in favor, 1 abstention (Mr. Whitney).

IV. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Review of Zoning with City Planner Barbara Goodrich

Ms. Goodrich reviewed the property's current R5.2 zoning which allows single family or duplex residential units, parks and playgrounds, as well as a few non-residential uses. Uses requiring a special permit include churches, vocational training and day-care centers, and would typically have a greater impact on the neighborhood. She reviewed the permitting process, noting that if the committee prefers a non-permitted use, it should pursue a zone change that favors that use prior to marketing the property. Ms. Goodrich described the processes for obtaining a variance and for changing the Zoning Regulations by map or text amendment. Mr. Oefinger reviewed the Historic/Institutional Re-use amendment to the Town Zoning Regulations adopted in 1995 to allow re-use of Mystic Academy. He added that Project LEARN continues to express interest in the property, but has not been willing to address the committee. Some time ago, the Town was approached by groups interested in using the building variously for condominiums, medical offices and a religious center. Remediation of the site would probably be required for any use that would make modifications to the building.

2. Development of Recommendation to Town Council

Mr. Oefinger suggested that the committee start putting together its recommendations, adding that it could even start the application process with Planning & Zoning for a Historic/Institutional Re-use amendment if it recommends selling the property to a developer.

The committee would prefer an educational use for the property; almost any other use would require a zone change. Survey results indicate that the public wants to keep the building, but the committee feels that a new owner should be required to demonstrate the financial capacity to maintain the structure.

Use by police, fire and emergency services groups was discussed, as was a previously discussed "land swap" with the Bill Memorial Library. The committee could also recommend no action on the property for the time being due to the difficulties with the economy. Also discussed was the possibility of attracting a developer who could take advantage of historic restoration tax credits.

3. Other

The next meeting will be held on November 21, 2011. The committee will compile the survey results, map out the various scenarios, enumerate possible zoning changes, and set forth its recommendations.

Ms. Goodrich offered to provide flip charts and other supplies for the meeting.

Ms. Kelly volunteered to work on a skeleton matrix to provide a structure for the group's recommendations.

V. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Galbraith, seconded by Mr. Whitney and so voted unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

Submitted by

Janet Downs, Task Force member